

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY



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International Council of Community Churches

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President's Message

Janet Millben Burch

*Happy Thanksgiving to all
of the Council members
and their families*



This Thanksgiving, may we celebrate not only the blessings we have received but also the opportunity to bless others. Let our prayers be filled with thankfulness for past mercies and with trust in God's guidance for the days to come. In unity, may our hearts overflow with peace, joy, and a steadfast spirit of thanksgiving.

As we gather around our tables, let us remember those in need and extend our gratitude into acts of kindness and generosity. A simple word or gesture, a helping hand, or a shared meal can brighten someone's day and affirm the power of love within our community. Let us strive to be instruments of God's grace, spreading hope and compassion wherever we go.

As Thanksgiving approaches, let us pause and reflect on the countless blessings God has poured into our lives. From the gift of family and friends to the comfort of faith and the support of our community, we have so much to be grateful for. May this season fill our hearts with joy, gratitude, and a renewed sense of hope as we thank God for His enduring love and grace.

- We are thankful for the collaboration of two organizations at Lake Forest, Illinois, 75 years ago that established a foundation for an ongoing partnership.
- We are thankful their leadership worked together to form a lasting alliance that focused on service, inclusion, unity, peace, and cooperation.
- We are thankful to those who have volunteered to serve in Ministry Leadership positions.
- We are thankful member churches, and their participants continue to provide financial support.
- We are thankful individual International Council of Community Church members have contributed their skills and talents to further the organization's mission.
- We are thankful to those who came before us and whose shoulders we stand on. We acknowledge their sacrifices and dedication.
- We are thankful the ongoing engagement and commitment from the International Council of Community Churches' members and leadership that have helped sustain its activities and goals.
- We are thankful that we can continue to count on your dedication and faith as we move to meet our future possibilities and challenges.



*"Heavenly Father on Thanksgiving Day
We bow our hearts to You and pray
We give You thanks for all You've done
Especially for the gift of Jesus, Your Son"*

Mary Fairchild





Executive Director's Message

Bruce Merton

Giving Thanks to God For Past, Present and Future

On Thanksgiving Sunday of 2013 I was the pastor of Peace Community Church (Fort Myers Beach, Florida) and, wanting to do something different, asked seven people to be the voices of a reader's theatre presentation that I had written. It was called **"Thanksgiving: Past, Present and Future"** and featured a seven voiced dialogue, choral music and congregational participation. It was very well received. Some even proposed that it be "an annual presentation." It was not, and for good reason. It would simply become old and stale in repetition.

Fast forward 12 years and Peace Church's current pastor, R.C. Fleeman, invited me to revise the presentation to reflect the times that have passed and the day in which we now stand. We will present the "new revised version" to the church family on Thanksgiving Sunday, 2025.

A **HUGE** amount of change has occurred in 12 years. You and I know this, and we catalogue and remember those changes in shared and individual memory. In reflection I was once again reminded of the great, for me the greatest, promise and assurance found in Scripture. Paul expresses it in Romans 8:37-39.

"No, in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Arching over all change, all events, the past, the present and the future is the eternal umbrella of God's love (agape) because, regardless of our activity and circumstances, that is what God is: AGAPE! That is cause for giving thanks to God for past, present and future. God is much more than "good all the time." God is Agape all the time and we can rest, abide, live and love with full confidence that if God is for us nothing can ultimately stand against us. **WOW!**

In the process of revising the 2013 readers theatre presentation, I wrote lyrics to a song that the congregation will sing. It goes to the well-known melody named Marion written by Arthur Messiter. I share it here with the fervent hope that you can see and know that the love (agape) of God constrains me, and hopefully you, to be thankful to God in and through all times and circumstances.

Rejoice! Give Thanks and Praise!

Give thanks! Our God has been our help in ages past.
Through want and plenty, war and peace
God's love still holds all fast.

Refrain

Rejoice! (Rejoice!) Give thanks! (Give thanks!)
Rejoice, give thanks and praise.

Our present time is filled with conflict, doubt, mistrust.
Yet still God's love remains secure
For every one of us.

Refrain

The future's ours to shape. With Christ it holds no fear.
He strengthens us to live in love
And bring God's Kingdom here.

Refrain

Give thanks for all our time – past, present, yet to come –
Finds its fulfillment in God's love
For all and not just some.

Refrain

(Permission is granted for your use, if desired.)

Our time - past, present and future- finds its victory and redemption, not in the activity of human beings, but in the love of the God that is Agape. Still, that does not absolve you and me from being co-workers with Jesus for the cause and ultimate victory of God.

We pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Let's renew our resolve to put our words into action knowing that even in the darkness the light of God's love will shine, and darkness will never overcome it.

Rejoice! Give thanks and praise! Have a blessed celebration of Thanksgiving and keep it going in all time and circumstance.

Bruce

ICCC NOVEMBER 2025

Celebrating 75+ Years

"Anchored by Grace, Transformed by Renewal: A Call to Revival." Ezra 9:8 and Romans 12:2)

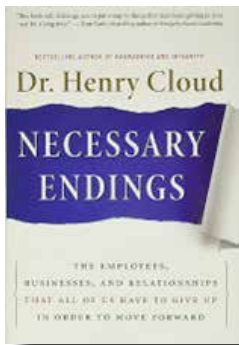


Book REVIEW

By Rev. Kenneth N. Nelson



Revival in any generation begins with God's grace (Ezra 9:8) and is sustained by the transformation of hearts and minds (Romans 12:2). Books that address revival, renewal, or reformation can be evaluated against this framework: how they highlight God's preserving grace for a remnant, and how they inspire transformation that resists conformity to the world. Here is a **book for renewal, tools for ICCC growth and loyalty**.



Necessary Endings by Dr. Henry Cloud

Overview

Dr. Henry Cloud's *Necessary Endings* is a powerful and practical guide to one of life's most uncomfortable yet essential disciplines: knowing when to let go. Whether in relationships, organizations, or personal habits,

Cloud argues that growth often depends on the ability to prune what no longer produces fruit. Drawing on principles from psychology, leadership, and Scripture, he reframes endings not as failures but as purposeful transitions toward greater health and productivity.

Core Premise

Cloud's central thesis is clear: "Endings are a natural part of life." Just as a gardener prunes a rose bush to promote future growth, leaders and individuals must courageously cut away the parts of their life, work, or relationships that drain energy, stifle vision, or block progress. Failure to do so results in stagnation, frustration, and burnout.

He identifies three types of pruning:

1. Healthy pruning — removing the good to make room for the best.
2. Necessary endings — eliminating what is dead or toxic.
3. Strategic endings — stepping away from good opportunities to pursue purpose and alignment.

Key Insights

- Clarity before courage: discernment comes before decision; assess whether an ending is due to hope, fear, or reality.

- Emotional resilience: ending relationships or jobs involves grief and discomfort; Cloud teaches how to embrace this as part of progress.
- Boundaries and leadership: mature leadership requires the ability to say 'no' firmly and wisely.
- Seasons of life: endings are seasons of preparation for new beginnings.

Memorable Quotes

"Without the ability to end things, people stay stuck."

"Growth depends on getting rid of the unwanted and the superfluous."

"Endings are not tragedies; they are transitions to something new."

"Failing well means ending something that is not working and choosing to do something else better."

We Want to Hear from You!

Do you have thoughts to share, or would you like to start a book discussion? We invite you to send your comments or express interest in a discussion by emailing us at iccnnow@sbcglobal.net by the end of the month. Consider sharing: Did the book inspire you to take action, change a behavior, or see things differently? How has it impacted your perspective or daily life? Let us know if we may quote or paraphrase your insights. Your feedback is valuable, and we appreciate the time you take to share it. Thank you, and may your month be richly blessed!

Introducing a Newsletter Series...

Part Two: Why Self-Care Matters for Christians?

The Christian walk is one of service—but constant pouring out without being filled leads to burnout. Self-care allows us to replenish our emotional, physical, and spiritual energy so we can serve with joy, not resentment. Without balance, we may continue in ministry outwardly, but inwardly we become weary, impatient, and ineffective.

Three Reasons It Matters

1. **To Avoid Burnout:** When we neglect self-care, we can begin to feel like Martha—distracted, anxious, and resentful (Luke 10:40). Without rest, we may serve out of obligation instead of love. Taking time for self-care allows us to return to our service with a heart full of joy rather than frustration.
2. **To Honor God's Design:** God created our bodies with rhythms of work and rest. In Exodus 20:8–10, the Sabbath commandment reminds us to pause. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19–20), and caring for them is an act of worship. Sleep, nutrition, and emotional health aren't luxuries—they're stewardship.
3. **To Model Christ-Like Living:** Our lives preach louder than our words. Children, friends, and coworkers are watching how we live. When we live with balance, practicing rhythms of rest and renewal, we model obedience and faithfulness. Others see that it is possible to serve God passionately without being consumed by exhaustion.
4. **To Sustain Ministry Impact:** Over time, exhaustion causes leaders and caregivers to step away from service entirely. By incorporating biblical self-care, we strengthen endurance, ensuring we remain fruitful in every season.

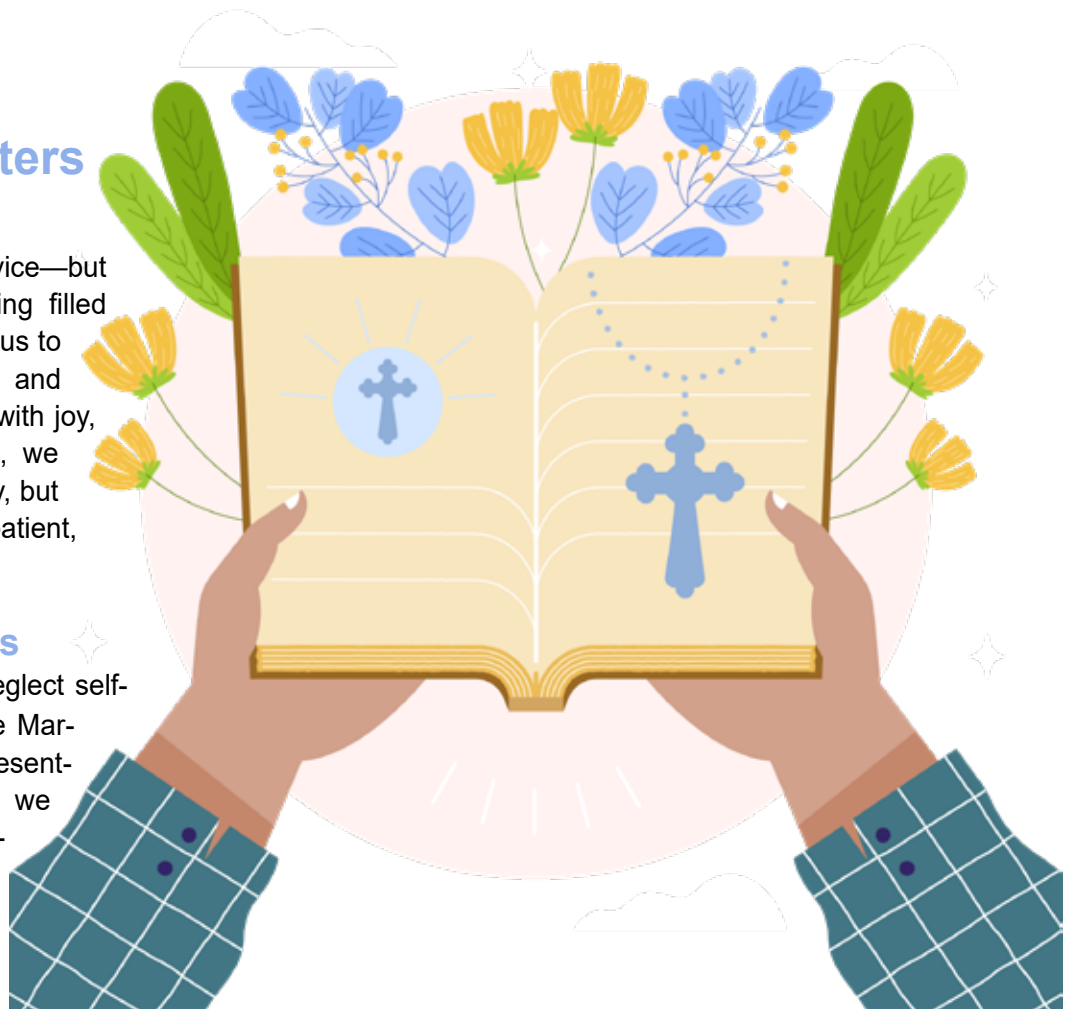
Scriptural Anchors

- Psalm 127:2 — God grants sleep to those He loves.
- Isaiah 40:31 — Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
- Matthew 11:28–30 — Jesus calls the weary to Himself for rest.
- Galatians 6:9 — Do not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time you will reap a harvest.
- Ecclesiastes 4:6 — Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil.

Reflection Questions:

- *Do I find myself becoming resentful or weary in service?*
- *What rhythms of rest can I put in place to honor God's design for my life?*
- *How can I model balance and peace to those I lead or influence?*
- *Am I ministering from overflow, or from emptiness?*

Watch for Part Three of this series in the December issue of the Christian Community.



A Light Touch

Submitted by Rev. Bill Ireland

Moderator for the ICCC Ministry Team for Leadership Development

From my youngest days, I have been fascinated by airplanes and flying. I learned to fly the real thing when I was quite young and flew for a number of years. These days I fly radio-controlled aircraft. Despite the difference in scale, I still get the same thrill.

One thing I learned about flying the real thing or a model is that a light touch makes for good flying. Airplane movies show us actors making exaggerated movements, violently turning the wheel this way or that or shoving the stick backward or forward. Such actions lend dramatic effect, communicating a sense of urgency and danger. In reality, however, a white-knuckled death grip on the controls isn't necessary to fly straight and level and perform basic maneuvers. In fact, if we hold on too tightly, we won't fly smoothly and are likely to overreact. Good pilots know the importance of loosening the grip and using a light touch.

I have a suspicion that when trouble or conflict shows up in our congregations, our first instinct is to grab the nearest lever and yank it as hard as we can in an effort to get things under control. We panic and overreact, thus adding our anxiety into the mix. In our effort to get things back to normal, we can overcompensate, tightening the spin. Most of us have learned firsthand the importance of a "non-anxious" presence in pastoral leadership. Our goal, when everything is seemingly coming unglued, is to project a measure of calm. If we employ a light touch, we may find it easier to get back on course.

Humor certainly plays a part in this. Lots of things we face are indeed serious and require serious and thoughtful action. But if all our congregation sees that we are over the top serious, they will likely become fearful. Finding something to laugh at, even in the midst of the worse kind of stuff, can lighten the mood and lower the temperature. In Super Bowl XXIII, the 49'ers were down to the Bengals with about four



minutes left in the game. As Joe Montana and his teammates huddled up to begin their final drive, Montana noticed that one of his offensive linemen was so uptight and tense he was almost out of control. Montana singled him out and said, "Look down there in the end zone. There's John Candy!" (for the uninitiated, John Candy was a well-known actor and comedian). The lineman looked up, saw John Candy in the stands and immediately relaxed. That light-hearted moment broke the tension, and the team went on to win the game. A

light touch means that while we take the situations confronting us seriously, we don't take ourselves too seriously. We can loosen our grip on the situation by finding something that lowers the stakes in the situation. As a result, the tension eases, and we can find a way forward.

As well, it is essential for us to remember the church belongs to God, not to us. For many of us, our sense of call is born of a desire to help others, especially those

in trouble. If

we do that often enough,

we can Whether

it's walking with a family through a time

of grief and loss, listening carefully as someone

unburdens his or her soul, or seeing to it that a

hungry person gets enough

to eat—all those things satisfy something deep within. If we do

that often enough, we will blur our

job description and take on too much responsibility. As a result, when our congregation becomes distressed, we immediately conclude it's our job to fix things. If we don't act and fix the problem, things will fall apart completely. Tightening our grip on the church in this manner winds up wearing us out and making its challenges all about us. If, however, we can loosen our grip and can separate our fate from the fate of the church, we will make room for the Spirit. Most of us need a wake-up call every now and then, one that reminds us that the church already has a savior and it's not us.





Seeking Pastor

Seeking a Shepherd for Our Little Church in the Woods.

Bradford Woods Community Church, nestled in the heart of Bradford Woods, PA, (just a stone's throw from Pittsburgh), a vibrant non-denominational congregation, seeks a dynamic pastor who embodies warmth, charisma, and a passion for community. We are looking for someone who can connect with people, inspire growth, and lead our church. We're a close-knit congregation averaging about 30-35 in Sunday attendance, with a rich history dating back to 1915.

Our ideal candidate will embody Christ's love, foster inclusivity, and guide us in spiritual growth and community service. We are also looking for someone who can connect with people to grow the congregation in an intentional and meaningful way. If you are driven to make a difference and eager to engage with our congregation and the broader community, we want to hear from you!

Come help us continue our mission of spreading God's love through worship, education, and outreach in our serene woodland sanctuary. For more details, please contact us at BWCC2025@gmail.com.

**Bradford Woods
Community Church**
4836 Wexford Run Road,
Bradford Woods PA 15015
724-935-3135

Worship Service in Phoenix, AZ

On Sunday October 5, 2025, at 10:00 AM, a visit was made to Shepherd of the Hills Church in Phoenix, Arizona for the worship service. During the service, Pastor Rock Fremont and the entire congregation extended a heartfelt welcome to Janet Burch and Camille Burch, making their visit memorable and meaningful.

Janet and Camille also attended the 8:30 AM worship service at the Church at Litchfield Park in Litchfield Park Arizona. The Rev. Kristofer McCoy is the Interim Senior Minister.



*ICCC President Janet Millben Burch,
ICCC Ecumenical Officer Rev. Rock Fremont, Jr.,
and Camille Burch*